



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

## City and State Elected Officials Launch the West Bronx Housing Coalition

GUSTAVO RIVERA March 12, 2015

| ISSUE: **HOUSING**

*Nine Elected Officials Join Forces to Address West Bronx Housing Crisis through Homegrown Solutions*

**(Bronx, NY)** – State Senator Gustavo Rivera joined fellow city and state elected officials to announce the launch of the West Bronx Housing Coalition. The Coalition will allow city and state legislators to work in unison to effectively combat the recurring housing and property management issues that plague the West Bronx in an effort to protect tenants and the housing they rely on.

While the West Bronx is home to many low-income residents and a high concentration of rent-stabilized apartments, they are still severely rent burdened, causing substantial financial hardship. They are subjected to some of the most deplorable housing conditions in the City, including unsafe buildings, harassment and poorly-maintained infrastructure. As the elected representatives of these communities, the Coalition members seek to strengthen the housing security of their constituents by building a grassroots movement and fighting for legislative and local solutions.

“It is evident that the West Bronx is facing a housing crisis that is drastically affecting the quality of life of our residents and impeding their ability to prosper,” said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. “I am honored to have my colleagues at the state and local level join me in forming the West Bronx Housing Coalition. There is no simple solution to our housing problem, but this Coalition will empower us to address the most pressing housing issues together, both as members of our community and as legislators. Our goal is clear—we want to ensure that every tenant in the West Bronx has the tools and the support that they need to secure and maintain a safe, affordable and decent home.”

**The overarching goals of the West Bronx Coalition are to:**

- Create and implement an educational campaign to inform tenants and landlords of their rights and responsibilities under the different housing laws and policies to curtail unjustified rent-destabilization

and unethical practices that strain tenant-landlord relationships.

- Engage and organize West Bronx tenants and community leaders onto a united and community-centric platform focused on effectively advocating for practices and policies that protect our affordable housing stock and the families that live in those apartments.
- Build a process to identify and appropriately address recurring issues that adversely affect our housing stock and the quality of life of West Bronx tenants by sharing information and collaborating to find and implement solutions.
- Work towards building and improving tenant-landlord relationships throughout the West Bronx in an effort to establish responsible building-wide policies, increase access to resources that will help protect affordable housing, and hold all parties accountable.

Coalition members are City and State legislators representing Kingsbridge, Fordham Heights, Belmont, University Heights, Mount Hope and East Tremont, who have demonstrated a commitment to pro-tenant legislative and community efforts. The Coalition plans to collaborate with local housing advocates, community leaders, and upstanding landlords that are committed to their tenants in an effort to combat practices and policies that are exacerbating the housing crisis in the West Bronx and creating extensive hardship to its residents.

“I am pleased to join my Bronx colleagues at both the city and state level to collaboratively take on the housing issues impacting the West Bronx,” said **Council Member Vanessa L. Gibson (D-16<sup>th</sup> District, Bronx)**. “Our communities have been wounded by too many stories of unjust evictions, unwarranted harassment, and unanswered property management complaints. Working together, this coalition will be able to address these growing issues holistically and turn the tide on negligent landlords and predatory buyers.”

“I am pleased to work with colleagues in government and community leaders to form the West Bronx Housing Coalition. Throughout my 21 years of representing the Northwest Bronx in the Assembly, I have been a staunch advocate for tenants. In addition to fighting for stronger tenant protection laws in Albany, my staff and I regularly help constituents understand their rights as tenants and resolve issues with landlords. The West Bronx Housing Coalition will be a strong, united voice for tenants in our community, and I look forward to working closely with the Coalition to improve tenant-landlord relationships in the years to come,” said **Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz**.

“As housing costs continue to spiral through the roof, families throughout the West Bronx are being squeezed by the worst affordable housing crisis in New York’s history, and I am pleased to join with elected officials from throughout our community as we stand-up for residents from all walks of life,” said **Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner (D-Bronx, 77th AD)**. “Together we can make a difference in the battle for quality affordable housing by unifying around an agenda that includes strengthening state rent

regulations. I am pleased to join with state Senator Gustavo Rivera as we work together on an issue that affects the entire West Bronx.”

“The West Bronx Housing Coalition is a platform that will allow my colleagues and I to address the current housing issues our constituencies face every day. There has been a tremendous need for housing preservation in the Northwest Bronx. As more people move into this area of the borough the pressure on the existing housing stock is at a breaking point, and we need to do everything that we can to protect it. The goals of this coalition will help resolve these recurring issues progressively in an effort to protect tenants and the housing they rely on,” said **Council Member Andrew Cohen**.

"The majority of tenants in my district struggle to afford the roof over their head," said **Assemblymember Victor Pichardo**. "They are often plagued by substandard living conditions in their buildings, and are in constant fear of not making their next month's rent. I, along with my colleagues in the West Bronx Housing Coalition led by State Senator Gustavo Rivera, vow to end this practice by reforming and strengthening New York State's rent laws."

“Without rent stabilization laws, housing would be entirely unaffordable to families of the West Bronx. The financial incentive of removing rent-stabilized tenants places these residents at risk for the worst abuses by malevolent landlords: harassment and the denial of repairs,” said **Council Member Ritchie Torres**. “I look forward to working with a coalition of elected officials and organizations to protect the rights of tenants in the West Bronx.”

“As a child I know how it is to live in a shelter with my mother and two sisters for six months. I am proud to be a part of this launching of the West Bronx Housing Coalition,” said **Assemblyman Jose Rivera**.

"As the cost of living increases and wages remain stagnant, maintaining affordable housing remains a central concern for residents in The Bronx and the city at large. Building a better Bronx requires that its residents have decent and affordable places to live, so I support the Coalition's efforts to inform residents of their rights, advocate for stronger rental protection laws, and fight to maintain and develop the affordable housing in our communities. Housing is a right, and residents in The Bronx deserve equal treatment and an affordable place to call home," said **Assemblyman Michael Blake**

###